

HOT TOPIC (06/28/17)

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT UIC PERMITS FOR DEWEY BURDOCK ISR SITE

EPA Region 8 issued draft UIC Class III and V permits and a proposed aquifer exemption on March 6th to Azarga Uranium (i.e., Powertech USA, Inc.) for a proposed uranium in-situ recovery (ISR) project northwest of Edgemont, South Dakota. These draft permits are the first EPA has issued for uranium recovery nationwide, and include some requirements that are new to the uranium ISR industry to ensure adequate protection of underground sources of drinking water. The proposed project site is near the Black Hills, where at least 38 tribal nations have historic claims or consider this area to be sacred. The comment period closed on June 19th, and EPA received over 8,000 comments. While many written comments are very brief (e.g., automated email and postcard responses), almost all commenters, including those who spoke during five days of public hearings, expressed opposition to this proposed project. Azarga submitted technical and legal comments as did at least one other uranium ISR company. A number of tribal nations also submitted comments including the Oglala Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribes, citing a number of concerns including violation of their treaty rights. Once the Region has reviewed all substantive comments over the next several weeks, we will be able to better determine the timing of our permit decisions. This timing will also be informed by continued consultation with those tribal nations who specifically requested to meet with us in their comments. We expect our final decisions will be appealed. The Region will to continue to coordinate with OW, OGWDW, OITA, OAR, OPA and OGC, and plans to brief up to the Deputy AA/OW on the scope and nature of these comments. **Contacts: Sarah Bahrman, 312-6243; Douglas Minter, 312-6079; and Valois Shea, 312-6276.**